



## Indiana In 1816

By MERRILL MOORES, Member of Congress from the Seventh  
District of Indiana

TODAY we are here in response to the call of the greatest of  
our poets, uttered years ago, but urgent today:

“Le’s go a-visitin’ back to Grigsby’s Station—  
Back where the latch-string’s a-hangin’ from the door,  
And ever’ neighbor round the place is dear as a relation—  
Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore.

Le’s go a-visitin’ back to Grigsby’s Station—  
Back where there’s nothin’ aggervatin’ any more.  
Shet away safe in the woods around the old location—  
Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore

What’s in all this grand life and high situation,  
And nary pink nor holly-hock a-bloomin’ at the door?  
Le’s go a-visitin’ back to Grigsby’s Station—  
Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore.”

Today the people of Indiana go a-visitin’ back to Grigsby’s  
Station and the sovereign State sings with another, but not a  
greater, poet:

“Dost thou look back on what hath been,  
As some divinely gifted man,  
Whose life in low estate began  
And on a simple village green:

Who breaks his birth’s invidious bar,  
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,  
And breasts the blows of circumstance,  
And grapples with his evil star:

Who makes by force his merit known,  
And lives to clutch the golden keys,  
To mould a mighty state’s decrees,  
And shape the whisper of the throne:

And moving up from high to higher,  
Becomes on Fortune’s crowning slope  
The pillar of a people’s hope,  
The center of a world’s desire.”

\*An address delivered at the Corydon pageant, June 2.

In becoming modesty, forgetful of what our State accomplished in a brief century of life, laying aside all thought of what Indiana is today in the great sisterhood of States, let us reverently approach the cradle of her babyhood, that we may do fitting honor to the pioneers, to whose labors and the sufferings our three million citizens are indebted for what Indiana is today.

Civilized Indiana was not conquered from the wilderness without bloodshed, in addition to toil and privation. The first European settlement within its borders was effected by men of Norman blood at Vincennes early in the eighteenth century and about two centuries ago. Eighty years before the constitutional convention met at Corydon, on Palm Sunday, 1736, as we are told, the commandant at Vincennes (a nephew of Louis Joliet, who, with Father Marquette, explored the Mississippi in 1673) was, in company with his general, D'Artaguette, and his faithful chaplain, Father Senat, missionary priest at Vincennes, burned at the stake by hostile Chickasaws, who had raided the post.

The story of Pontiac's conspiracy and war tells of fierce fighting in and across the Indiana territory as long ago as 1763. A party of Indians, under an English captain named Henry Bird, guided by the renegade, Simon Girty, in 1780, crossed Indiana, and raided the Kentucky settlements along the Licking, killing and scalping every white hunter and trapper encountered. One need only recall the massacres from Lochry's Creek in 1780 and Vincennes in 1785 to those at Pigeon Roost and around Vallonia in 1812; Clark's expedition in 1786 and Wilkinson's later, the successive defeats of Josiah Harmar and Arthur St. Clair, followed by Wayne's victory in 1794, and the final conquest of the hostile Indians in the battles of Tippecanoe and Fort Wayne to realize the risk of fortune and liberty and life taken by the pioneers of Indiana.

In 1800 the census gave Indiana 5,506 people. In 1810 the population had grown to 24,000, divided between four counties, Harrison, 3,595; Knox, 7,945; Clark, 5,670, and Dearborn, 7,310.

In December, 1815, by a territorial census, the territory had grown so rapidly, since the cessation of hostilities with

the Indians, that the population was only a hundred short of 68,000; and of the thirteen counties, Harrison was fifth with 6,975.

That the new State was growing with tremendous rapidity is shown by the fact that in the next four years the population more than doubled; it increased 116 per cent and became 146,988.

The life of the Indiana pioneer cannot be better told than it has been in the verse of the greatest of our poets, from whom I quote again:

“And musing thus today, the pioneer  
     Whose brawny arm hath grubbed a pathway here,  
 Stands raptly with his vision backward turned  
     To where the log-heap of the past was burned,  
 And sees again as in some shadowy dream,  
 Or sniffing, with his antlers lifted high,  
     The wild deer bending o'er the hidden stream,  
     The gawky crane, as he comes trailing by  
 And drops in shallow tides below to wade  
     On tilting legs, thro' dusky depths of shade,  
 While, just across, the glossy otter slips  
     Like some wet shadow 'neath the ripples' tips  
 As drifting from the thicket-hid bayou,  
     The wild duck paddles past his rendezvous.”

In picturing the log cabin home of early times, the poet said:

“And o'er the vision, like a mirage, falls  
     The old log cabin with its dingy walls,  
 And crippled chimney with the crutch-like prop  
     Beneath a sagging shoulder at the top;  
 The coon skin battened fast on either side;  
     The wisps of leaf tobacco—cut and dried;  
 The yellow strands of quartered apples hung  
     In rich festoons that tangle in among  
 The morning-glory vines that clamber o'er  
     The little clapboard roof above the door;  
 The old well sweep that drops a courtesy  
     To every thirsty soul so graciously;  
 The stranger, as he drains the dripping gourd,  
     Intuitively murmurs, “Thank the Lord.”

The interior of the cabin was pictured with:

Bough-filled fireplace and the mantel wide,  
Its fire-scorched ankles stretched on either side,  
Where, perched upon its shoulders, 'neath the joist  
The old clock hiccoughed, harsh and husky-voiced;  
Tomatoes, red and yellow, in a row  
Reserved not then for diet, but for show,  
Like rare and precious jewels in the rough,  
Whose worth was not appraised at half enough.  
The jars of jelly, with their dusty tops;  
The bunch of pennyroyal, the cordial drops;  
The flask of camphor and the vial of squills;  
The box of buttons, garden seeds and pills,  
And ending all the mantel's bric-a-brac,  
The old, time-honored family almanac."

We are fortunate today to have before our eyes the massive building in which met the men who laid the strong foundations of our statehood, the Capitol Hotel, where many of them boarded during the brief session of the convention, the elm tree to whose grateful shade they adjourned their session on the hottest days, the houses where lived Governor Posey and other territorial officers, and others where some of the members are still remembered to have boarded. Many of the great men of 1816 are passing from our memory, but the solid masonry erected by the sturdiest of them all, Dennis Pennington, still stands, let us hope, as a perpetual monument to them and their work.

When the convention met the governor's mansion was occupied by a gallant soldier of the American revolution, Colonel Thomas Posey, with whose handsome features we are all familiar from the well-known portrait which adorns the State library at Indianapolis. Governor Posey was a Virginian who had fought in the battle of Point Pleasant, in Lord Dunmore's war in 1774. As a captain of Virginia continentals, he had assisted in the defeat of his old commander, the same Lord Dunmore, at Gwynn's Island in 1776. His company was transferred to Morgan's renowned rifle corps, and he served with distinction and great gallantry at Piscataquay, Bemis Heights, Stillwater, Stony Point and at Yorktown. He had served in Indian campaigns under Anthony Wayne, in Georgia, and, in the Northwest Territory,

had been lieutenant-governor of Kentucky and United States senator from Louisiana, and was governor of Indiana Territory from 1812 to 1816, succeeding in that office three other eminent soldiers, Arthur St. Clair (of the Northwest Territory), William Henry Harrison and John Gibson.

The secretary of the territory was, and for sixteen years had been, John Gibson, a man of rare force, character and judgment. A college-bred man, he was taken prisoner in an expedition against the Indians before Lord Dunmore's war and was saved from the stake in the same manner that Pocahontas saved the gallant Virginia captain. He later married a sister of Logan, the celebrated Indian chief and orator; and it was our John Gibson who heard and reported the famous speech of Logan, which every school boy will remember, made after his entire family had been massacred by drunken whites: "There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one." Gibson had been with Lord Dunmore and Colonel Posey at Point Pleasant in 1774 and, like Posey, had commanded a regiment during the revolution.

Thomas Randolph had been attorney general, but was killed in action in the battle of Tippecanoe and the office had not been filled. He was a Virginian, a descendant of Pocahontas, a gentleman of education, cultivation and refinement. His wife was a daughter of General Arthur St. Clair.

Davis Floyd was auditor of public accounts, a Virginian who had served in the Revolution, and had been imprisoned for a brief period for association with Aaron Burr, for whom he had procured in 1805 a territorial charter for a water power company at the falls of the Ohio. Henry Vanderburgh, one of the justices of the Supreme Court, had served as a soldier in the Revolution, as had the fathers of John De Pauw, Robert A. New, William and Charles Polke, Joseph Holman, John Dumont, Benjamin Chambers, the Beggs brothers, Samuel Merrill, and many others active in the organization of the new State.

The convention met here in Corydon, June 10, 1816, consisting of forty-three members chosen from the thirteen organized counties. The members were magnificently repre-

sentative of the Indiana pioneers. Nearly all of them seem to us astonishingly young; but it requires youth to supply the strength, vigor and ambition needed to conquer a wilderness. Among them were many destined to future greatness, Jonathan Jennings, William Hendricks, Benjamin Parke, William Polke, James Noble, Robert Hanna and D. H. Maxwell. And no less eminent was to be the modest squire, John Tipton, who was to be chosen the first sheriff of Harrison county under the new constitution and to be a great leader in the Senate of the United States from middle life clear down to its end.

Members of the convention, like the pioneers they represented, came from all the original colonies north and south, as well as from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, and from French, Flemish, German and Indian ancestors. Many were college-bred, but most of them could write only their names. They had inherited widely diverse traditions and beliefs as to political and religious matters, but they stood unitedly for education, religious freedom, and, almost as one man, against slavery.

It was a Frenchman from Vincennes, and, I think, a Catholic, who, as chairman of the committee on a bill of rights, reported this provision, which was unanimously incorporated:

"All men have a natural and indefeasable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences. No man shall be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent. No human authority ought in any case whatever to control or interfere with the rights of conscience. No preference shall ever be given by law to any religious societies or modes of worship, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification to any office of trust or profit."<sup>1</sup>

The same Frenchman, as a member of the committee on education, consisting, beside himself, of a future judge (James Scott) of the Supreme Court of college training, and three members,<sup>2</sup> whose letters still in existence prove that they could neither spell conventionally nor express themselves grammatically, reported the following provision, also unanimously adopted:

<sup>1</sup> John Badollet, referred to here, was a native of Geneva, son of a Lutheran minister.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> William Polke, Dan Lynn, John Boone.

"Knowledge and learning generally diffused through a community, being essential to the preservation of a free government, and spreading the opportunities and advantages of education through the various parts of the country being highly conducive to this end, it shall be the duty of the General Assembly to provide by law, for the improvement of such lands as are or hereafter may be granted by the United States to this State, for the use of schools, and to apply any funds which may be raised from such lands, or from any other quarter, to the accomplishment of the grand object for which they are or may be intended. But no lands granted for the use of schools, shall be sold by the authority of this State, prior to the year 1820, and the monies which may be raised out of the sale of any such lands, or otherwise obtained, for the purpose aforesaid, shall be and remain a fund, for the exclusive purpose of promoting the interest of literature and the sciences, and for the support of seminaries and public schools. The General Assembly shall, from time to time, pass such laws as shall be calculated to encourage intellectual, scientific and agricultural improvement, by allowing rewards and immunities for the promotion and improvement of arts, sciences, commerce, manufacturers, and natural history, and to countenance and encourage the principles of humanity, honesty, industry and morality."

Notwithstanding the fact that human slavery had been permitted in the territory and that slaves were recognized as property by territorial law, and the further fact that most of the members of the convention had emigrated from slave states, the convention, without even the formality of a vote, put this provision in the constitution:

"There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in this state, otherwise than for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted. Nor shall any indenture of any negro or mulatto hereafter made and executed out of the bounds of this state be of any validity within the state."

The convention was in session three weeks and did not sit on Sunday. In that time its members builded for us a constitution in my opinion in many respects better than the one we have today.

Its members met here in Corydon in this noble building, and on hot days under the spreading elm we know and love so well. Let us in grateful reverence thank God for their labors.

It takes but little imagination to fancy we can see presiding in that hall today the courteous and suave Jonathan Jennings, beside the no less accomplished secretary, William



Hendricks, and about them gathered the learned and ambitious Isaac Blackford<sup>3</sup> so recently from Princeton; sturdy, honest, and strenuous Dennis Pennington, backed by the nephew of Daniel Boone, the Irish Patrick Shields, progenitor of famous men, the shrewd and crafty Davis Floyd and the capable [Daniel C.] Lane. I see Frederick Rapp from New Harmony dreaming of a social millennium. And I see the Polke brothers, representing different counties [Perry and Knox], politicians and fighters, cousins of one then living who was to become President [James K. Polk]; a cousin who was to succeed, in that high office, the great soldier who had for twelve years been governor of the territory and was himself to be grandfather of another President yet unborn, whom we knew and whose memory we delight to honor.

I like to think that in that month of June a hundred years ago Thomas Lincoln came across the river from Hodgenville with his seven-year-old boy looking for better land in Indiana and, stopping with his brother Joseph on Big Blue river in Harrison county, brought the slim, big-eyed boy to get, in Corydon, his first glimpse of statesmanship and to go home to tell the loved Nancy and little Sarah of the promised land beyond the beautiful river, where, in the county named for the gallant captain [Spier Spencer] of the Yellow Jackets, they had chosen their future home.

I can see, too, the man [John Tipton] who succeeded at Spencer's death to the command of Corydon's Yellow Jackets, a hero of Tippecanoe, turned modest magistrate the same year, but who led the Yellow Jackets again at the battle of Tipton's Island in 1813. I see him crossing the street to the courthouse to talk with Floyd, Pennington and Boone about his candidacy for sheriff, and, as I look, the picture fades, and I see the founder of Logansport and the locator of Indianapolis standing in the Senate of the United States, as he did on February 5, 1836, and I can almost hear what he is saying:

"I do not wish to be considered an alarmist: my fears have not been operated upon by the rumors of war so frequently heard. I do not expect to raise recruits in time to terminate the war now raging between us and the Seminole Indians, nor am I influenced in the course I have taken by

<sup>3</sup> Blackford was not a member. The speaker must have had Benjamin Parke in mind.

anything that has been said here or elsewhere on the subject of any other war; but purely by a desire to put our peace establishment upon a respectable footing, and to prevent the recurrence of these conflicts with the Indians on our borders.

I am unable to see any just cause for war, unless it arise from unfortunate collisions, which will occasionally occur. *I am convinced that the sure way to prevent war is to be well prepared for it.* I am aware that the people of this country look with a jealous eye upon every step taken to augment our military force. The people, when rightly informed, will do what is right. The army is their army; the money to support it is theirs; the government is theirs; and I feel assured that they desire to see the army sufficiently numerous to answer all the purposes for which it was created."

The next paragraph of his speech reads like a report made yesterday by the Secretary of War to our Senate.

"It is shown by these statements that, in the Eastern Department, on the lakes and along the seaboard, there are 33 military posts, 14 of which are now without troops to garrison them, and of course liable very soon to go to destruction.

In the Western Department there are 22 posts, 9 of them unoccupied by troops. The number of the rank and file of our army is so small that it is impossible for the troops to occupy all the forts. The companies, now consisting of about 50 men should be increased, so as to enable them to render all the service required to be performed by an army.

"The unsettled state of affairs in Mexico, and the actual war in Texas will cause a restiveness among the Indian tribes in the southwest border of the United States, which should not be unprovided for.

"The presence of a respectable force at Forts Armstrong and Snelling, in 1831-2, would have prevented the war (Blackhawk's) with the Soukees (Sacs), which cost us \$2,500,000; and a similar array of troops, if stationed at Fort King and Tampa, would certainly have prevented the war now going on in Florida—a war which will certainly end in the annihilation of the poor deluded Seminoles."

His words of warning fell on deaf ears. Would that today his ringing voice directing the way to lasting peace might be again heard in the Senate speaking for Indiana.

Richly indeed has this our old capital endowed the State with great men from among her sons. Much do we owe to you, Corydon, our ancient civic center. Today, we bring you just tribute, bride of Indiana's youth. I scorn to credit the tale so often told that an early governor named you from a silly, sentimental, dolorous song. Rather would I believe that in the golden days, when Spencer was captain of the Yellow

Jackets, as well as genial landlord of the tavern near where the courthouse was to be built in the, as yet, nameless village, viewing with delight the fair prospect of hills green with pasture and valleys rich with the promise of future production, in memory of the Faery Queen of the great poet, whose name he bore, our captain named the rustic village for the simple shepherd, Corydon, who, unrequited, wooed the fair shepherdess Pastorella; and, in his christening, consecrated the village forever to innocence, simplicity and beauty.

Fair Corydon, may another century's passing find you as simple, innocent, lovable and homelike as we have found you this day.